

Ilean Rochelle Rabens

11.20.26 – 12.13.12



Ilean Rochelle Linsky was born in November 1926 to Morey & Francis Linsky in Chicago, IL where she grew up until attending the University of Illinois in Champaign/Urbana. Ilean graduated with a double major in Journalism and Theatre Arts in 1947.

While in college Ilean met the love of her life Robert Allen Rabens, whom she married after graduation and spent 33 years with until his passing in 1980. This union produced three children, Mark, Laurie and Robin who still all reside in California.

After their marriage, Ilean started working for the Chicago Sun Times as a Journalist while Bob attended medical school at the University of Illinois/Chicago Professional Campus. Once Bob graduated from medical school they moved to Rochester, MN where he started his residency at the Mayo Clinic and Ilean became the Social Page Editor of Post Bulletin News.

Ilean started her theatre career in Rochester assisting with the production of Brigadoon which would lead to a life-long involvement in the arts. Also at this time Ilean met Pauline Kelvin the wife of a fellow Resident which sparked the start of a 24 year collaboration of children's theatre productions. Their initial foray into this medium was called "Pixie Players" where Ilean directed and Pauline wrote the music and played piano accompaniment.

Upon earning his MD in medicine Robert and Ilean moved to Lynwood, CA in 1954 where he started his practice as an Internist at St. Francis Medical Center.

Ilean and Pauline re-established their partnership in children's theatre through the Lynwood Recreation Department and worked together for 24 years and then extended to Ilean's tenure at Cerritos Community College for an additional 11 years when Ms. Kelvin became ill.

This was just the start for Ilean who next became involved in various other volunteer positions. Ilean helped establish the Helpline Youth Counseling Center in Norwalk, CA and served as Chairman of the Board from 1971 – 1973.

Ilean then decided to further her education studying and earning her MFA in Theatre Arts from USC graduating in 1976. Her Master's thesis was titled "A Historical and Analytical Study of Junior Programs of California".

Soon thereafter Ilean started a new career as Director of Continuing Education/Cultural Arts at Cerritos College from 1979 – 1996. This post allowed Ilean to implement continuing educational opportunities for adults, which included planning and leading multiple trips abroad and starting a Children's summer camp for the ABC School District.

Following her departure from Cerritos College Ilean went to work for the Los Angeles Music Center for the Performing Arts - Education Division, as Manager of Community Partnerships. Her responsibilities included the administration and expansion of Community Partnerships and furthering the development of her own proprietary programs called Arts Care, A.C.E. and BestArts.

This involvement led to her work with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health where she partnered with Dr. Doris Soghor to bring the Art S.M.A.R.T (Social-Multicultural-Academic-Recreational-Therapeutic) program to at risk children placed in juvenile halls and detention camps.

The program is based on the belief "that the arts are a vital part of life and that exploring, imagining, creating and sharing can be a transforming and healing experience for at risk and/or severely emotionally disturbed (SED) children and adolescents."

Art S.M.A.R.T. has offered a rare opportunity for minors to experience a "new world," – a world of hope and beauty that can exist them beyond their pain, fear and confinement. The visual and performing art classes have kids from various backgrounds working together in harmony and learning to overlook cultural, ethnic and racial differences. Working together, while creating something unique and original, has left a passing, positive impression on many of them. Art S.M.A.R.T. has increased the participating minor's self-esteem, communication skills and their ability to work as a team. The program has allowed the minors to tap into the creative self that many never knew existed, and has encouraged self exploration which can be carried over into other areas of their lives.

This program continues to thrive today helping troubled youth by working with local performing artists, who teach a variety of art disciplines such as dance, theatre, visual arts and music. Ilean provided Art Smart with guidance, structure and foresight by writing grants, soliciting funds, acquiring artists and the ongoing liaison with all the collaborative agencies.

This affiliation brought Ilean and Supervisor Don Knabe together who acknowledged her fine work with the DMH by appointing her to several successive terms as a Mental Health Commissioner for the County of Los Angeles. During this time she authored and championed the STIGMA program designed to further the public's understanding of medical illness and pre-conceived prejudice.

Another long-lasting project Ilean started was the BestArts program now in its 12th year. This annual conference teaches pre-school teachers the value of music, arts and crafts and how to integrate this into their daily curriculum. This conference now attracts over 1000 teachers annually and is hosted at LBCC.

Ilean loved to travel, was an ongoing patron at the Mark Taper Forum and Ahmanson Theatres and served as a respected mentor and associate to dozens of close friends and associates. Ilean is survived by her three children, nine grandchildren and resided in Long Beach since 1986.

Ilean Rabens was a true visionary and extraordinary advocate who fused her love of the performing arts with her passion to assist those with challenging mental health issues.